

**For Immediate Release**

**CONDITION OF EDUCATION SHOWS READING IMPROVEMENT**

***Indicators prove that early intervention helps student achievement***

(November 14, 2001 - Des Moines, Iowa) - The state's early education and intervention efforts such as reduced class sizes and targeted literacy initiatives are beginning to show results, education officials said today when they released the annual Condition of Education report.

"After nearly 10 consecutive years of decline in elementary reading comprehension scores, the scores for 2001 showed slight increases," said Ted Stilwill, director of the Department of Education. "Our hope is that this is the beginning of an upturn in reading comprehension scores for Iowa students. If this is the beginning of continued improvement, it will be the result of Iowa's investment in early literacy and improving instruction through professional development and class-size reduction."

Corine Hadley, president of the State Board of Education, said the State Board and Department of Education assess student achievement based on student proficiency levels rather than comparisons of test scores or grade-level scores. "We developed proficiency standards so we could ensure that students strive for an optimum level of achievement," Hadley said, "not an achievement based on how well an average student might be performing."

Those proficiency levels for fourth-grade reading, for instance, show that comprehension is inching back up: 67.8% of the state's fourth-graders are reading at or above proficient level, compared to 67.7% in last year's report. Math indicators also are showing gains: 71.4 of fourth graders are at or above proficient level, compared to 71.0% last year.

"These are modest gains, but they show promise," Stilwill said. "Fourth grade is a critical year to watch. That's why many of our focused efforts to improve achievement have been targeted at the elementary level. We must continue that commitment and investment in instruction, at both the state and local levels, in order to see the improvements reach the middle school grades."

Other highlights from the 2001 Condition of Education (2000-01 school year data):  
Public school enrollment:

- 494,291 students compared to 498,607 students in 99-00, a decline of 4,316 students or 0.9%.
- Graduating seniors outnumbered kindergarten students, 36,892 to 33,977.
- Enrollment is projected to decline to about 482,000 students in school year 2005-06.
- Enrollment increased for all racial/ethnic groups: Hispanics by 11.4%, African American by 3.3%, American Indian by 2.9%, Asian by 0.4%.
- 9.4% of students, or 8,151 total, were Limited English Proficient (LEP), up from 7,453 the prior year.

- Two school districts, Des Moines and Sioux City, accounted for about one-third of the state's LEP students.

Class size average 00-01 compared to 99-00:

- Kindergarten 18.6 (19)
- 1<sup>st</sup> grade 18.8 (19.4)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 19.7 (20.1)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 20.6 (20.8)

Student Achievement using biennial period data from 1999-2001

4<sup>th</sup> grade reading comprehension at or above proficient level:

- 67.8% compared to 67.7% last year.
- 64.9% of females and 70.9% of males
- 69.8% of Whites, 38.8% of African Americans, 45.1% of Hispanics, 64.5% of Asians, 47.2% of American Indians.
- 50.3% eligible for free or reduced lunch, 74.6% not eligible.

4<sup>th</sup> grade math at or above proficient level:

- 71.4% compared to 71.0% last year.
- 70.8% of females and 72.6% males.
- 74.0% of Whites, 41.6% of African Americans, 47.3% of Hispanics, 71.0% of Asians, 52.6% of American Indians.
- 55.3% eligible for free or reduced lunch, 78% not eligible.

8<sup>th</sup> grade reading comprehension at or above proficient level:

- 69.3% compared to 69.7% last year.

8<sup>th</sup> grade math at or above proficient level:

- 73.6% compared to 74.1% last year.

11<sup>th</sup> grade content area reading at or above proficient level:

- 74.8% compared to 75.1% last year.

11<sup>th</sup> grade quantitative thinking at or above proficient level:

- 79.6% compared to 80.1% last year.

Drop-outs as a percent of public school students in grades 7-12 (year ending 2000):

- 1.75%
- 1.51% female, 1.99% male.
- Whites represented 83.5% of dropouts (and 92.4% of total enrollment).

Intentions to pursue post-secondary education or training:

- 82.7% of graduates, compared to 78.7% in 99-00.

Teacher data:

- The average Iowa teacher earned \$6,419 less than the national average.

- Teachers in the smallest districts of 250 students or less earned an average of \$14,852 less than the national average.
- Iowa teacher salaries rank 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation.
- Average number of teaching assignments, public school teachers grade 9-12: 3.06.

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